CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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LETTER DATED 21 JANUARY 1997 ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT TRANSMITTING A STATEMENT BY THE PRESS SECRETARY OF THE WHITE HOUSE AND A FACT SHEET ON UNITED STATES' INITIATIVES ON ANTI-PERSONNEL LANDMINES

Attached is a copy of a Statement by the Press Secretary of the White House on Anti-Personnel Landmines and a Fact Sheet on United States' initiatives on Anti-Personnel Landmines, issued on 17 January 1997.

I would be grateful if these texts could be issued as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament and distributed to all member States and non-member participant States of the Conference.

(Signed): Stephen J. Ledogar
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release January 17, 1997

STATEMENT BY THE PRESS SECRETARY

United States Announces Next Steps on Anti-Personnel Landmines

President Clinton today announced that when the Conference on Disarmament opens its 1997 session in Geneva on Monday, the United States will seek to initiate negotiations on a worldwide treaty banning the use, production, stockpiling, and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. As the President said before the UN General Assembly in September, "Our children deserve to walk the earth in safety." The United States hopes that the nations of the world will work with us to create that safety and ban the scourge of landmines, which every year kill or wound more than 25,000 civilians.

To give further impetus to this effort, the President has decided that the United States will observe a permanent ban on the export and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. This action builds on the Landmine Export Moratorium Act sponsored by Senator Patrick Leahy, which has temporarily prohibited the export and transfer of these weapons since 1992. We urge all other nations to join us in stopping the export and transfer of these mines, which will both hasten the completion of a comprehensive ban and save many innocent lives. As another step toward a ban, the President has decided to cap our anti-personnel landmine stockpile at the current level of inventory.

President Clinton last May announced the United States's intention to achieve as soon as possible a worldwide ban on landmines. In December in the UN General Assembly, nations voted 155-0 in favor of the U.S.-initiated resolution urging states to pursue such an agreement.

After extensive consultations with many countries, the President believes that the Conference on Disarmament offers the most practical and effective forum for achieving our aim of a ban that is global. Both the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the Chemical Weapons Convention were successfully negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament.

The United States looks forward to the opening of the Conference on Disarmament on Monday as an opportunity to begin discussion of these initiatives and to make early progress on starting negotiations. At the same time, the United States welcomes efforts outside that forum, including the free-standing process initiated by Canada, that can help provide momentum to our common goal.

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release January 17, 1997

FACT SHEET

U.S. Initiatives on Anti-Personnel Landmines

People in 64 countries, mostly in the developing world, face a daily threat of being killed or maimed by the estimated 100 million landmines buried around the globe. The United States is committed to ending the carnage and devastation caused by anti-personnel landmines (APL) -- the hidden killers that murder and maim more than 25,000 people every year. In addition to those steps announced today, the United States has already undertaken a number of important actions.

Negotiations to Ban APL

On May 16, 1996, the President announced a new U.S. APL policy, which included a commitment to aggressively pursue an international agreement to ban use, stockpiling, production, and transfer of anti-personnel landmines with a view to completing the negotiation as soon as possible.

On December 10, in the UN General Assembly, nations voted overwhelmingly (155-0) in favor of the U.S.-initiated resolution urging states to pursue an agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines.

Today we announced that, at the opening of the Conference on Disarmament on January 20, the United States will begin work with other member nations to initiate negotiations on an agreement to ban APL. This 61-member forum in Geneva, Switzerland includes most of the world's strongest landmine ban advocates and most of the world's major APL producers. It is

the forum in which the recently-signed Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was negotiated, as well as the Chemical Weapons Convention.

APL Export and Transfer Ban

Since 1992, the United States has observed by law a temporary moratorium on the export and transfer of anti-personnel landmines, but this law expires in three years.

Today, we announced that the United States will observe a permanent ban on export and transfer of APL. We encourage all other nations to join us in a permanent ban on APL export and transfer to end forever the spread of these weapons.

APL Stockpile

As the President announced in May, the United States plans to destroy by the end of 1999 about three million non-self-destructing APL. Destruction of these mines is well underway. The United States will retain only those non-self-destructing APL needed for training and for defense in Korea.

Today we announced that the United States will cap its APL stockpile at the current level of inventory. We encourage other nations to do so as well.

APL Use Restrictions

On January 7, the President transmitted to the Senate for advice and consent to ratification the amended Mines Protocol to the 58-nation Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW). The United States led the effort to strengthen the Protocol, which establishes new norms that can protect civilians, even as countries work toward the goal of an APL ban.

The Protocol now expands the scope of the original Protocol to include internal armed conflicts, where most civilian mine casualties have occurred; requires that all remotely-delivered anti-personnel landmines be equipped with self-destruct and self-deactivation features to a very high degree of reliability; requires that all

non-self-destructing mines only be used within marked and monitored fields; and that all APL be detectable, to facilitate mine clearance.

Expanding Demining Capabilities

In May 1996, the President directed the Department of Defense to significantly expand its humanitarian demining program to train and assist other countries in developing effective demining programs.

The Department of Defense was also directed last May to undertake a substantial program to develop improved mine detection and clearing technology and to share this improved technology with the broader international community. Research and development funding for this effort was increased in Fiscal Year 1997 to $14.7m.

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